

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Bible Questions and Answers, Part 48**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 70-20

Well, I have no idea what I'm going to say tonight. This is a novel experience; you understand that. I usually come highly prepared. It's been a busy week for me. We had, on Monday and Tuesday all day, both days, the board meetings for the Board of Directors of the Master's College and Seminary. We had marvelous meetings, intense meetings, going over all the matters that pertain to the college and the seminary, both of which are booming, both of which are growing and flourishing and, consequently, experiencing all kinds of challenges.

Also, all this week, I had the privilege of doing a series of messages at the Master's College in chapel on the inerrancy of Scripture. And so, through the week, able to share with the students and also to remind myself of the fact that we have the true and authoritative and inerrant word of the Living God. So it's been a wonderful week and a great opportunity to minister on those particular accounts.

But it's always the highlight of my week, no matter where I am or what I do, to be with you and to open God's Word with you together. And tonight, really, you set the agenda, what it is that you would like to know is what it is that I would like to be able to say. I can't promise that there's an immediate answer for every question, but I'll do the best I can, and I have the MacArthur Study Bible in front of me with all of the stuff in the footnotes.

You know, it is a bit of a difficulty for me because I, through the years, have preached out of the New American Standard, and I continue to do that, and that serves the purpose, also of writing the commentaries before...Moody Press Commentary on the New Testament, that series, which is on the text of the New American Standard and has been from the beginning. So I need to continue to work with that text. But having written the study Bible on the text of the New King James, I'm sort of caught in the middle. And as you know, Sunday mornings, I read the Scripture out of the New King James, preach out the NAS. But whatever text I use, I try to work my way around if there's variations that you need to know about so that we're always dealing with the appropriate text.

But it is an unfortunate thing that we have so many translations, and you...I don't know whether you're going to be glad to hear this...there are more coming. Soon there is coming a new one that...I've talked to the people who are doing that, called the ESB, which is another, sort of, title for another translation that I think will be a very fine one, but it will certainly pose another difficulty. We, in the English language, have a hard time sort of agreeing on what the Bible says because we have so many translations.

But I...if there are variations, and there are variations in these translations, sometimes variations in the original text that they have chosen, or not that original manuscripts but the sources of their texts, their English texts. Sometimes there are variations. But we always try to deal with those variations and let you know what they are and pick the one that we think is best. So...

But tonight we'll be using the New American, the New King James, I should say, since if I need any help, I'm here to help myself with my little notes. It's up to you, then, to pose the questions about the Bible or theology or ministry or whatever might be upon your heart. And the mics are there. We have some of our pastors who are going to come and help you. Dick Mayhue, over there, at my right. And Tom Pennington in the middle. And Jim Pyle on the left. And you need to go and just kind of pose your question to these men, and they'll help you to articulate the question quickly so that we can cover as much ground as possible. And then you'll have the opportunity, I hope, to get to the mic and ask the question.

Now, I want to make sure that you pose your question and that you give me your name, if you will, so I know who I'm talking to. That really is very helpful to me. Okay? Are we ready anywhere?

Male Speaker: We're ready.

John: Who's ready? Tom, we'll start right in the middle, yes.

Joe: Hi, John.

John: Hi. Your name is...?

Joe: Joe McIllete. You and I played basketball many, many years ago together.

John: Hey, Joe. Yes. Yeah.

Joe: How you doin'?

John: Good.

Joe: John, you know, we started this search some 30 years ago, when you were just getting started. One of the questions that I have for you...first of all, I have to preface this by saying you have always been very, very bold in the way you've preached, and I've appreciated that. I only hope you can appreciate the boldness in which I ask this question.

John: Sure.

Joe: John, my question is...30 years ago, you started teaching me. I'm just curious...have you changed in any of your stances or interpretations of anything biblical or maybe the way you might have said something? Let's face it. You probably have offended some people, and maybe a better word is convicted some people. But I'm just curious, has any changes in your stances or interpretations.

John: It's great to see you, Joe, and that's a very good question, and I'm glad you asked it. And let me answer it this way. I have not changed my theology because I had the benefit of great training. I had the benefit of great training under my father, who had a sound and a right approach to Scripture. I had great training in my seminary experience. I sat under men who had the right understanding of Scripture. Some of the men that taught me in seminary are now teaching in the Master's Seminary and have from the beginning...Dr. Roskob, Dr. Thomas. So I was benefited by not having to sort out and figure out everything on my own once I got into the ministry, which would have probably produced many more changes.

There have been very few times when I actually have changed something. I remember one Sunday night I preached on why the anti-Christ will be a Jew. And somebody came to me after the sermon and said, "You're wrong." This was very early in my ministry here. And he sent me back to the Scripture, and so the next Sunday night, I preached on why the anti-Christ will be a Gentile. And I still couldn't make up my mind, so we left both tapes in there for awhile. You could have your pick. But I've come to believe that the anti-Christ will be a Gentile.

There have been just a couple of occasions like that. But I would say what might appear to people to be changes really is a refinement. I would say I've always believed what I believe, but as you grow older, and as you deal more with Scripture, it becomes more refined. And so I might go back and say...I wouldn't say it that way anymore. I would be more clear. There would be a few things that I would change. There have been a few interpretations of a passage that we would...through the years, we've gone back and changed the tape or eliminated something, but nothing of major proportions.

Occasionally, on a Sunday, I'll say something in a sermon and ask them to pull it out because I didn't say it clearly, or I misspoke...I said something that was the opposite of what I meant by throwing in a not or something like that. But for the most part, the theology that I was raised on and trained on and taught has stood the test of all the years of exegesis. But it is true that it has been greatly refined. And I am now much better able to articulate it.

I think where that may show up most dramatically is in the fact that I've never had to pull any of my books back and take material out of them. And as you heard this morning, I think I've written about 80 books and, if you add study guides and things, a lot more than that. But I've never had to go back and throw anything away.

There would be...there have been a few interpretations, maybe, of matters in Revelation or prophetic matters that I might see a little differently now than I did years ago when, maybe, I was a little more prone to let the headlines mess with my exegesis than I am now. But for the most part, the theology has stood the test of time.

And with regard to the matter of offending people, I...that's only a problem to me if I am the offense. It's not a problem to me if the Word is an offense because it is. That is the way it is. If people are offended by the Truth, then I have fulfilled my responsibility. If they're offended by me, then I need to repent. I want to speak the Truth in love. I don't want to be the offense. But I understand that people who believe error, people who believe the lie, people who don't understand the Truth or aren't committed to it are offended by it. I mean, certainly, in the culture in which we live today. I mean, the basic idea is you have to tolerate anything and everything that anybody and everybody believes. So...

And people ask me all the time...is it hard to be so bold? Is it hard to be so dogmatic? And the answer is no. It's relatively easy because I don't speak my own words. If I come and teach the Word of God, then I have to let the Word of God say what it says. So I don't wrestle with...how is that going to effect me? Are people going to like me? Am I going to be popular? Am I going to make enemies? That never comes into my mind, literally never comes into my mind. I never think like that. All I think about is what is the Truth here. And I don't think...well, this is Truth, so let me crank up ten decibels and really get this across. I don't think about technique. I don't think about the style of my preaching or whether I yell or don't yell or whether I try some theatrical enhancement to make a point.

I just love the Truth. I get passionate about the Truth. And it's the Truth that compels me. And if the Truth is an offense, then it needs to be an offense. You know what I'm saying? I mean, it's like a doctor...if you go to the doctor, and he tells you you've got cancer, you don't like it. That's an offensive statement. But if it happens to be an accurate diagnosis, it's really the important thing for you to hear, and then you have to deal with it.

You know, I don't like to have enemies. I don't choose to do that. But people who don't want to hear the Truth have a problem not with me but with the source of the Truth.

I hope that answers the question. Very good question, Joe. Thank you.

Over here.

Gene: Hello, John. This is Gene Stouts, and I have a question for you regarding a book I just read by Earl Davies, Heaven is a Far Better Place. I actually had three questions, but Dick said I can only ask one. The question I guess I'm going to ask is...is Heaven an intermediate state? Or is Heaven an

eternal state?

John: No, there is no such thing as an intermediate state. There is no such thing as purgatory. That is a fabrication of the Roman system...nonbiblical. Heaven is...really, Heaven is the presence of God. In fact, in the New Testament, you read about the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are the same thing. Heaven is where God is.

There are distinguishing parts of Heaven in the sense that there is a place in the Old Testament that is called "Abraham's bosom," but it was a place of the righteous dead in the presence of God. And there is in the book of Revelation a city called the New Jerusalem that is described as an 1,800-mile cube that hangs in the middle of eternal space, and that is the capital city of Heaven. The throne of God is there, and it gives a tremendous description of that in Revelation 21-22.

So, there are features of Heaven that can be described, but what characterizes Heaven above all things is that Heaven is where God is. When Jesus on the cross said to the thief, "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise," you might say Paradise is not the final new Heaven and new Earth, which hasn't yet been created, and it won't be created until this one is destroyed. So, we are waiting for the new Heaven and the new Earth, which is our eternal state. But, Jesus said, "Paradise is the place you're going to be with Me."

And so, whether it's paradise or whether it's Sheol, or Hades in the Old Testament...the place of the dead, the righteous place of the dead...or whether it's the present Heaven, absent from the body for a believer, in II Corinthians 5, is to be present with the Lord. In Philippians 1:21, Paul said, "Far better to depart and be with Christ." Throughout all of redemptive history, those righteous ones who leave this world enter into God's presence, whatever the unique characteristics of His presence at any given time might be, or any given point, I guess you could say, in eternity.

We are still awaiting the new Heaven and the new Earth. That is not talking about the eternal abode of God; that's talking about that which will replace the present physical Heaven and physical Earth. That will make up part of that eternal state. But, the best way to understand Heaven is it is the immediate, full presence of God and Christ and the Spirit and all of those that have died righteous, and their spirits are now in the presence of God waiting for the resurrection when their bodies will be gathered to join them, new bodies, glorified bodies. Okay? There are no intermediate states.

Andy: John, my name is Andy.

John: Hi, Andy.

Andy: I want to ask you...in Genesis 6, if the Nephilim giants didn't survive the flood, how come when Caleb and Joshua and the spies went to Canaan, they found the Nephilim giants there? And also,

why are there so many interpretations of Genesis 6?

John: Well, the fact that there are so many interpretations of Genesis 6 means that a lot of people have gotten it wrong, right? Because there is only one proper interpretation. I understand that because there are some obscurities in the passage, okay. There are some obscurities in the passage. It's helpful to me, however, to know that most of the views that are different than the one that I hold have come later in history, that the earliest views of Genesis 6 that we can find...even among rabbis, to say nothing of early church fathers...viewed the "sons of God" as angels.

So, by taking, as we did when I went through that, the "sons of God" as fallen angels, demons, who come down and possess men, who then take wives and really desire demon involvement, and have children. That's to show the depth of the fallenness of man: he engages himself with demons willingly. I think that, in the context of what Satan was doing in Genesis 6, it's the best interpretation. It's consistent with what he tried to do in the garden as we pointed out at the time.

But, it says that at that time there were giants on the Earth in those days, and it uses the word Nephilim. The term is from a Hebrew verb "to fall," and it has to do with powerful beings that crush somebody. This is not a race of people; this is just some powerful people, some powerful men who fell on others in the sense of overpowering them. That's what I put in the note and that's exactly what I believe is accurate.

They were already on the earth when children born of these unions of demonically possessed people came out. They were mighty men. It says, "The products of those unions were mighty men and men of renown." There were, in ancient times, mighty men and men of renown born to those unions. But, there also were these Nephilim, these powerful, powerful conquerors. The idea is that they are threats, dangerous. It just describes them because we want to know something about the pre-flood society. There were oppressive, I suppose you could say even deadly, men in that day. There were powerful, I suppose we could call them conquerors or warriors.

And so that word Nephilim is describing them. Later on, when the spies went into the land, and they came back to report what they had seen, they simply said, "There are Nephilim there." They didn't mean that they were the children of Nephilim, as if they were a race. Nephilim, because of its usage here, was sort of a word that they all knew was in the Scripture, and they knew that it referred to giants. And so when they came back and wanted to report that essentially the Canaanites were unconquerable, they simply said, "They're Nephilim." They just took that word in its generic sense...in its general meaning...rather than having it refer to some race. They couldn't have been children of Nephilim. Nephilim was not a race; it wasn't a tribe; and they couldn't have had any children that lasted until that time, as you said, because the flood drowned everybody but eight people.

So, it's just a term that has to do with warriors...powerful, deadly, fearful kind of men. And Joshua...in Joshua and Caleb's day, the spies who didn't believe they could conquer Canaan wanted to make their point as strongly as they could and so they said, "They're like the giants, like the Nephilim that are mentioned in Genesis, chapter 6." Okay?

Andy: Thank you, sir.

Charles: Good evening, Pastor John. I've been listening to you for years, and I finally mustered up enough courage to come and ask you this question.

John: What's your name?

Charles: My name is Charles Johnson.

John: Hi, Charles.

Charles: I wanted a question...I guess this all falls under the same category. Let's say a person is born into this world, and they have Downer's Syndrome. And as they grow old, they can never understand or come to a place where they understand the Gospel. And also, let's say a person lives their whole lives...let's say an example like my mother or my father, and they're attacked with a disease, Alzheimer's, in their brain. I guess you would say it goes into a dysfunctional stage and to the point where they don't understand normal things anymore, and they've never received the Gospel prior to this disease or, with the situation with Downer's Syndrome, never before...how does God see them on the category of coming to...?

John: Sure. We must understand what we said this morning, that nobody can be converted to Christ today, nobody can be saved, apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Anybody who gets a disease like Alzheimer's disease or dementia or what they used to call hardening of the arteries or senility, reaches a point in old age where they no longer can process information, has still had a life before that and still had the opportunity to live up to the life they had and to believe if that was their hearts desire. So those people are culpable.

You have your lifetime. You have your rational lifetime. I mean, many people, at the point of their...reach some point in life, many people reach some point in life where they're not fully rational, but they have still had their life, and that's all that God gives a person.

That's why it's so critical to come to Christ in your youth. As Ecclesiastes says, "Remember thy Creator in the days of Thy youth." You know, the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, before you start falling apart. And he describes it there, describes all of that. The legs don't work anymore. The eyes don't work. The ears don't work. The brain doesn't work. The hands begin to tremble. And you better

remember your Creator before you get to that point.

In regard to somebody who's born with Down Syndrome or somebody who's born with some kind of genetic deformity or somebody is born with some kind of a brain injury or misformation of the brain to whatever degree, and they cannot understand, then I believe that God deals with that individual in a very special way because no one can be saved apart from faith in Christ. But no one can be damned apart from unbelief. And those people can neither believe nor disbelieve.

And, you know, back in Genesis 4, God says, "Have not I made the blind and the lame and the \_\_\_\_\_? Have not I made these people?" And I believe that God deals with those people in His own way. Since they cannot believe and they cannot disbelieve, they have to be treated in some way by God that is unique.

And I think the best way to understand that is to understand how the Lord deals with infants who die. And you go back into the story of David, in the Kings, where his little boy died, infant son. And he said, "He cannot come to me, but I shall go to him." That's a very compelling statement. Well, David didn't mean, "I'm going to be buried in the same cemetery." There wasn't any hope in that. There wasn't any encouragement. He was finding encouragement in the fact of a reunion. And David had the confidence in his heart that he would see that child again.

And then you have the Mark 10 passage where Jesus says, "Permit the little children to come to me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." And He picks the little children up, and it says He blessed them. There is no occasion in the Bible where God does that, where Christ does that to a nonbeliever, to one that's not His own. He embraces little children, and He blesses them, which indicates that there is a very special care for those who are not yet able to know, as it were, they right hand from their left, to believe or not believe.

And there's one other element. And this could be developed over a long kind of look through the Old Testament. I won't do that. There was a certain kind of worship in Canaan, the worship of the God Molech or Moloch. That worship involved incinerating a child. In other words, to appease the God Moloch, they would take one of their babies and build a fire on an altar and incinerate the baby to appease the God. And the Old Testament calls that...and this is very interesting..."the slaughter of the innocence."

So there is God, saying about those infants, that they are innocent. They are not the children of...they are not the circumcised children of Jews. They weren't the infant baptized people of Presbyterians, as an analogy. They were the kids of pagans. They didn't have an family covenant protection, is what I'm saying, and he said it was the slaughter of the innocents. If God designated them as innocent even though they were children of pagans who couldn't believe or not believe, that's pretty significant.



So I think what you have in any kind of, any situation, is if a person has the mind of a child and an inability to believe or not believe, they fall under the category of an infant, of an innocent. I believe God takes them to Glory. I believe they are His special care, thus the Mark 10, "Permit the little children to come unto me, for such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Now, if you have a child who is Down Syndromed, a child who has some learning disability, a child who is autistic or something like that, I think it's critical...very, very important...as that child grows, whatever the disabilities of that child might be, some genetic defect or whatever, I think it's still critical, as that child grows and develops to whatever degree possible, to communicate the Gospel to that child because you don't know the full faculties. You don't know whether they do have that capacity at some point to embrace Christ in a simple childlike way. Because, "unless you become as a little child," right, "you're not going to enter the Kingdom," Matthew 18. So it is a message a child can believe. And you don't want to assume that that child can't believe.

We've had so many kids like that here. I remember...and some of you will remember the story...there was a young boy in our ministry to the disabled who was mentally very young. I think he was about 20 physically and maybe...I don't know, how do you calculate that...four or five. Just very, very young, mentally...six, seven. His name was Rodney, and for some reason, he had a great love for me. He was very mistreated by his family. His parents couldn't deal with his disability, and so they sort of pushed him off on the church, and he became my pal. And I wanted to see how far he could go. And so I got to know him a little bit, and he had a great affection for me. He would often stand by me at the close of a service. He has since been transferred to another home somewhere. But he would stand by me in the service, and he'd put his little head on my chest while I was talking to people. And I'm sure many people thought he was my child, and that was okay. But that's what he did. But he had a special love for me, just to show you what was going on in his little heart.

And I would talk to him about Christ, and he would tell me things he was being taught in that class for those are mentally handicapped. And he said to me one day...he said, "I need a new Bible." And I said, "You need a new Bible?" And he said, "Yep." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, look at my Bible." And he pulled out this Bible, and I'm telling you...this was one of those just cloth-covered Bibles, just a very, very cheap Bible. And he couldn't read. And it looked like somebody had literally put a sort of a buzz saw in there and just chewed it up. I mean, it was mangled. And I said, "Rodney, what did you do to your Bible." Well, he said, "I have to ride my bike to church, and sometimes I have my Bible, and I just put it over my handles, and I ride." And he's just grinding up his Bible as he rides, you know. So he said, "So I need a new Bible." And I said, "Well, what kind of Bible you want?" He said, "I want a Bible with big numbers." I said, "Big numbers?" He said, "Yep. Because when you're preaching, and you say look at verse two, I find the two. When you say look at verse three, I find the three." And I thought to myself, "Some people don't even care to find the words, let alone the numbers." I said, "You go over to the bookstore. You get the Bible over there with the biggest

numbers." So he came back, and he had a Bible with big numbers.

I was...sometime later, after that...he came to me, and he said, "I want to be baptized." He said, "Everybody else gets baptized. I want to be baptized." So I said, "Well, you have to go talk to the people in your department, your teacher, and they have to talk to you and find out if you really understand the Gospel." So a few weeks later he came back, and he said, "They said I could be baptized." And I said, "Well, good." So we were in the backroom, and I was doing the baptism that night, and we always have a little testimony time. And I said to him. I go, just wanted to make sure, I said, "Rodney, I just want to be sure now. Who is Jesus Christ?" He wrinkled up his nose, and he said, "You mean you don't even know that?" He thought I need the information. And I said, "Yeah, I know that." He said, "I thought you knew that." And he knew who He was, and he came into the waters of baptism, and he gave his testimony.

I might have underestimated him. Somebody else might have underestimated him. I think his parents underestimated him. So that's why we have the ministry we have with these people, isn't it? Don't underestimate what the Lord can do in a simple heart. But I think God treats those people who can't believe or not believe in a way of grace, in a gracious way, and embraces them and blesses them and gives them Heaven as trophies of His grace. Okay?

Charles: Thank you, sir.

John: Good question. Yes?

Edith: Hi, John. This is Edith. First of all, happy anniversary.

John: Thank you.

Edith: I think you must have been preaching and teaching have your life here at Grace Community Church now.

John: Almost. Almost. I've got a few more years before it's half my life, but I hadn't thought of it that way, but that's true. I know more than half of my life is gone, and that's for sure.

Edith: I wanted to ask a question about God's day of rest and how it might relate to the fall of man. I was wondering if perhaps the reason why Adam and Eve fell, could that have been because God was resting. And because God is the only one who's inherently righteous, He must uphold everyone else in righteousness. Was it because He was resting that He sort of took His hand off of them, and, therefore, they were able to fall into sin because of that?

John: No, but that's an interesting and provocative question. I have the idea that somebody put you up to asking that question, or somebody may have asked you that question. But no. And I'll tell you,

when you study the creation account, it doesn't say that God stopped doing everything. It says, "On the seventh day, God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done." That simply means He rested because the creation was over. He rested from the specific work of creating the universe.

He continues, as Hebrews 1 tells us, to uphold all things by the Word of his power. Had God actually stopped doing everything, the whole thing would have disintegrated completely. He has to uphold what He created. What it's saying there is simply that the work of creation was finished in six days, and you could even translate it, "God ceased from his work" because the work was done. And that's all that that intends to say.

In fact, God didn't even establish there some kind of ceremonial seventh day. It was not that He said to Adam, "Now, you need to rest." He didn't, sort of, launch that idea there. He just stopped working because the work was done. And it was that singular work of creation, okay?

Edith: I thought, actually, you had taught that God has to uphold the world now because it's fallen. I was thinking that before it was perfect, and so He didn't have to uphold it.

John: Well...no, I don't know how I said it at the time, but God, the Creator, is also God, the Sustainer. He has to sustain by His power everything that exists. I mean, there were atoms in the world at that time. There were protons and neutrons and molecules. And there was energy. And there was the matrix of time, force, action, space and matter, the mixed matrix of verse one, which is the composite of everything that exists. And the God who spoke that all into existence also spoke into perpetuity.

It isn't to indicate that it all was self-perpetuating. Nothing can continue to exist apart from God. But whatever measure of tranquility God knew after the original creation was shattered by the fall, certainly, God was required to sustain everything all the time. I guess when you introduce into it the second law of thermodynamics, chaos, disorder, the curse and the fall, that upholding takes on a different dimension because now it becomes a battle against the different tendencies that were there that weren't there originally. So it may be the nature of that work is necessary, but it is still God the Creator who sustained the universe by the power that He alone has that causes all physical processes before the fall to continue to operate. Okay? Good.

Edith: Thank you.

John: Yes?

Scott: Good evening, Pastor MacArthur, my name is Scott Bird, and I just wanted to preface my question by thanking you for the opportunity to open the pulpit. My text comes from James 5:16, and that simply reads: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you

may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." And my question is simply...I've often been confronted with the idea that in order to have authentic relationships among the brethren, that we need to confess our sins to each other. How far should we go in confessing our sins to each other? And what types of sin should we confess to one another?

John: Well, that's a very good question, and I think...I think we have to start with this, that the only one that can forgive our sins, the only one...as we were saying this morning...who can make that true forgiveness, the one who is truly offended is God. But I think the intent here of James is that when you have sinned against your brother, I think you need to confess that sin. I don't see here some kind of mandate to run around confessing all our sins to everybody.

Now, there was a time in the past when that sort of sensitivity-training kind of mentality invaded the Church, and it was very, very destructive. It became sort of "Can you top..." or "Can you bottom this?" I don't think that's the intent. What you have in this context here is a person who is weak and a person who is spiritually defeated, not so much physically sick but spiritually defeated, who has no spiritual strength, who goes to the elders and asks the elders to pray. In the state of spiritual weakness, he has committed sins. He has offended. He has transgressed. The text is saying you need to make that right. You need to deal with that. You need to be honest and open and sharing with others that you recognize those things that are an offense. I don't think it does any good to say, "Well, you're my Christian brother; let me dump all my sins on you."

So I think the perimeter for that kind of thing is established by the relationships that are affected by the transgression. Instead of somebody confronting you about your sin or somebody feeling the effect of your sin and having you hide it and cover it up and not acknowledge it, the right thing to do is to acknowledge it. And that's all part of the catharsis of this whole text.

You had people here in the churches James is writing to who are under tremendous persecution. Actually, they were under the sentence of death. There were people who, literally, were taking the believers. And some of them were caving in under this tremendous hostility, and they had become weak, and in their weakness, in vacillation and compromise, they had sinned and committed sins, and they needed to deal with those things. And if they were ever going to be restored and put back together spiritually...maybe they were so weak that they couldn't deal with the things themselves, then they were to go to the elders and let the spiritually strong pray for the spiritually weak so that the Lord could lift them up. And if they had committed sins, then they would be forgiven at that point, but they still had the necessity to go out and to be honest and open about their iniquities and to bring about that kind of restoration that comes only when we acknowledge that we've offended somebody.

So I really do think the perimeter for that is the perimeter of those who've been affected by that sin. Okay?

Scott: Thank you.

John: Good question.

Josh: Hello, Dr. MacArthur. My name is Josh Henson.

John: Hi, Josh.

Josh: And my question's in regards to Jesus' words in Luke 24:20, when He says, "And in the same way He took the cup. And after they had eaten, He said, 'This cup, which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" And based on those words of Jesus, can we, with certainty, look back at the new covenant that Jeremiah spoke of in chapter 31. And even though it was made with the house of Israel and Judah, say that the Church is a part of that covenant? Are they the same? Or is there a difference there?

John: Between?

Josh: Between that what Jesus spoke of, the New Covenant He spoke of in Luke and the New Covenant that's spoken of in Jeremiah 31? Because it says specifically that it's just made with the house of Israel and Judah. So it would be wrong to say that that is for us as well?

John: It is not wrong, and it is the same covenant. Understand this...God didn't promise any nation other than Israel a Messiah. God promised Israel the Messiah. God promised Israel the Kingdom. God promised Israel the new covenant, not that it might end with them but that it might come through them. But from the very beginning, the promise of a new covenant was to extend to the nations. Jeremiah acknowledges this. Isaiah acknowledges this, that the impact of the new covenant is going to be worldwide. So the promises...Romans 9 says, "The Jews were given the promises and the covenants." It was to them the promises were made. It wasn't to them the promises were exclusively given. But they were told that there would be a Kingdom, and there would be a King, and there would be a sacrifice that would provide complete cleansing for sin. The promise was made to them because they were chosen people of God, who were then to take that promise and declare it to the world, that God has promised to us a Savior for the world.

I suppose it's parallel to the promise that the angel Gabriel came and gave to Joseph. "The Savior's going to be born to you. You're wife's going to have the Messiah, the Son of God." The same promise came to Mary. It isn't that the promise made to them is therefore limited to them. It is that they become the instrument through which the promise comes to the world. It is true that, though the new covenant is described in Jeremiah 31, and the new covenant is ratified in the death of Jesus Christ, the terms of the new covenant were being applied since the day of Adam because even

Adam's sins were forgiven on the basis of what Christ would do, as everybody else before the cross. And now everybody since the cross is forgiven on the basis of what Christ did.

So God had a new covenant. I try to point this out in some of our teaching recently. There was the covenant of the law, right? The mosaic covenant. And when you look at the covenant of the law, it condemns you because you can't keep the law, and there's no grace in that covenant. And so you're left humble, crushed under the law. But then God gives another covenant, the covenant of forgiveness, the covenant of grace, the covenant that we know as the new covenant. And by virtue of the new covenant, God can act graciously because He knows the Messiah will come. And in God's mind, the Messiah was slain before the foundation of the world so that His sacrifice could be applied. Okay?

Josh: Thank you, sir.

John: Good. Jim?

Jim: Yes, John, Jim Doyle. My question is in regards to your sermon this morning. You made mention of the paralytic..you raised the question as to whether the paralytic knew that Jesus was God. And my question is...does a person have to know that Jesus is God in order to be saved? Believe He is God in order to be saved? Are the terms synonymous? Or does belief presuppose knowledge?

John: No, I think that man didn't have to know that because of where he was in redemptive history, prior to the death of Christ and the resurrection. He was still under the Old Testament economy. He may have thought that Jesus was God. He may have wondered if He was God. He certainly believed He was sent from God. I think once his sins were forgiven, and he was healed, he may have believed that this was God. And once he experienced the power of regeneration, both spiritually and physically, he may have come to that conviction.

But since the cross and since the resurrection, you cannot be saved unless you confess Jesus as Lord. And Lord means God, sovereign God. So no one is going to be saved today who doesn't acknowledge Jesus as Lord. And, not only that, believe that God raised him from the dead, which means you have to believe in his death as a sacrifice for sin that satisfied God, and so God raised Him to affirm that satisfaction. The terms then, after the death and resurrection, are laid out in Romans 10:9, 10. Okay?

Jim: Thank you.

Sandra: Good evening. My name is Sandra Rogers. I often listen to you on KKLA over the years, and tonight it brought me here.

John: Good.

Sandra: I guess my question centers around the anointing. I understand that the Greek translation for Christ means the Anointed One and his anointing. And I notice that throughout the Bible in many instances, different people who have been empowered with the anointing have...I mean, they go from one point to a person of power. And even with Jesus, what, up until He was 30, and then He began His ministry, it talks about how the Holy Spirit came upon Him. My question centers around...what actually...how does this transition happen? I've been, from my understanding, it's meditating on the Word, and that we all individually can be empowered.

John: Good question. Very good question. And it opens up a whole lot of possible directions to talk about. There were three, essentially three, types of people that were anointed in the Old Testament: prophets, priests and kings. The anointing was...and you have to understand this, first of all, was symbolic. They, maybe, were anointed with oil. They was, perhaps, hands laid on them in some symbolic fashion. And what that meant...what to be anointed meant, essentially, was that they were set apart for some special service within the theocracy, within the earthly realm of God's rule. Priests were set apart to bring men to God. Prophets were set apart to bring the Word of God to men. Kings were set apart to rule on behalf of God. And so the actual, physical anointing was symbolic.

There are also a number of places in the Old Testament where you have the spiritual anointing described. And it very often will say, "The Spirit of God came upon so-and-so, and he prophesied." "The Spirit of God came upon so-and-so, and he went here and did this." And sometimes it'll say, "And the Spirit of God departed."

When you're talking about anointing, you're talking about something that was very particular in the Old Testament. It's not something that occurred in the life of all those who were believers, all those who were the children of God, all those who had been justified, declared righteous by faith. It is a unique ministry of the Spirit of God to empower somebody for a very particular level of spiritual service. And, interestingly enough, it seems to be confined to the Old Testament. You don't really have anybody in the New Testament of whom it says, "And the Spirit of God came upon, and He did this, and the Spirit of God departed."

It was a unique ministry of the Holy Spirit. I believe the Holy Spirit was ministering in the Old Testament, convicting people of sin, or nobody would be saved. I believe the Holy Spirit was regenerating people in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit was enabling people. Because, let's face it, it didn't matter when you were alive, you couldn't come to God on your own; you couldn't repent on your own; you couldn't serve God on your own; you couldn't love God and obey God's law on your own. You had to be enabled by the Spirit of God.

But there were those special people with special callings, some of them revelatory in that they actually spoke the very Word of God. That was a very unique responsibility. There are no kings in Israel, no kings at least in the line that God affirmed in the time of Jesus, of course. There are no priests really anymore, and there were no prophets after John the Baptist, who was anointed really by the Holy Spirit for that unique role from his mother's womb, according to Luke 1. And so I think you have to see that as a very special work of God for someone who fit into a role in the theocracy that was unique when Israel constituted that theocratic kingdom on earth.

When you come into the New Testament, you don't read about anointing. You read about all believers being given the Holy Spirit who has been with you, but shall be where? In you, and you believe...you see on the day of Pentecost, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And you read in First Corinthians Chapter 12 that we've all be made to drink of the same spirit. And Romans 8, if you don't have the Holy Spirit, you don't belong to Christ. Conversely, if you do belong to Christ, you do have the Holy Spirit. And even the Corinthians, who were carnal and fleshly and divisive and immoral, and they were doing things that dishonored the Lord, He says, "What know you now that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have of God. You're not your own. You're bought with a price."

And Jesus said, "When you receive the Holy Spirit, you shall receive power." Acts 1:8, "You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you should be witnesses unto Me in Judea, Jerusalem, and Samaria and the end of most part of the earth." So in the New Testament era, the spirit of God is given in fullness to all believers, all believers, at the moment of salvation. But we are instructed, if we are going to enjoy the fullness of what that means, we need to walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5, which means to obey the Spirit. How do we know what the Spirit wants? The Spirit wants what's in here, because the Bible reveals the will of God, who is that Spirit. So we don't need to be looking for some anointing.

There are gifts given to the Church. Some of us have the gift of preaching and teaching. Some of us have the gift that helps in administration. Some of us have the gift of faith and giving, and they're all outlined for us in First Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and mentioned in First Peter 4. We have those gifts. There are gifted men given to the Church, Ephesians 4, evangelists and pastor teachers. So we have gifted people.

And with the gifts, according to Romans 12, comes a measure of faith to operate that gift, but we don't read about anointing. The Apostles had a very unique anointing. They were given the power to cast out demons and the power to do healings. But that was the Apostles. Those were the signs of an Apostle.



So for us, as believers, and even for me as a preacher...and I think some people can be confused about it. That's why it's such an important question. I'm not looking for some anointing. I'm not look for some mega dose of the Holy Spirit. That's not something that I am called to look for. What I'm told to do is to walk in the Spirit. What I'm told to do is let the word of Christ dwell on me richly. What I'm told to do is to use my gift. What I'm told to do is to be diligent to study the Scripture to show myself approved unto God a workman that needs not to be ashamed. What I'm told to do is preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, Second Timothy 4.

For me, it is a matter of recognizing a gift, thanking God that I possess the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and there's no more fullness necessary, because I'm not gonna give divine revelation. I have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We all have the fullness of the Holy Spirit available. There's no more of Him to get, folks...no more of him to get. That's one of the great errors in the modern charismatic movement, the idea that some people have a little bit of the Holy Spirit, and some people have a whole lot of Him, and the fact of the matter is, you are all the temple of the Spirit of God, who in His fullness dwells within you. The question is not how much of the Spirit is there. The question is how much of you is obedient to Him. So for me, in ministry, it's a matter of recognizing a gift. It's a matter of walking in obedience, walking in holiness, walking in with a pure heart and a pure mind, and a pure life, so that I can enjoy the full power of the Spirit of God, and in knowing the Word of God so that I can bring you the truth through the purest vessel possible. It's not sort of waiting for something to fall on me. I'd be waiting a long time. You know, there are people who felt that they couldn't really preach if they didn't have some sort of mega dose of God's Holy Spirit dumped on them in some transcendent experience.

One of the people who believed that was Dr. David Martin Lloyd Jones, the great preacher...the great expositor in England, who said that he only felt...that he felt he actually only preached two real anointed sermons...in his life. I don't know what he felt when he was preaching those two. I don't know what he thought the difference was. Maybe his brain was functioning. Maybe he really had a grasp of the material. Maybe God, in a marvelous way, used the Truth that he preached to sweep over many, many lives, and he interpreted that way. But I've listened to him preach a lot of times, and I'll tell you what...every time he preached...every tape I've ever heard, every message, every book, he has exhibited to me the knowledge of the Word of God, the power of the Spirit of God and a clear, clear love for the Truth, which he accurately handles.

So I don't think as Christians we need to be looking for more of the Spirit. But we need to be giving up more of ourselves to the Spirit. And that means less of me and more of Him, which means doing His will, obeying his Word. Okay?

Sandra: Thank you.

John: You're welcome. It's a day-by-day walk. Yes?

Toya: Good evening, Dr. MacArthur. My name is Toya Tyler, and my question has to do with prayer and my responsibility. I've been diagnosed with a brain tumor, and I am not...I don't pray that God take it away. My prayer has been, "Strengthen me," 'cause I know He...I have it for a reason, and He's gonna use me with whatever it is, and I have joy. So am I...I'm not praying that he takes away that \_\_\_\_\_. I'm confused. Can you please help me?

John: I hope I can, Toya. How old are you?

Toya: Thirty-four.

John: Thirty-four. Yeah, you can pray that he'll take it away. You can certainly pray that, and you can pray whatever's in your heart to pray. But at the end of that prayer, what do you have to say? Not my will...

Toya: Your will be done.

John: But Yours be done. But you can pray that. God has a right to say, "Yes," to that, doesn't He?

Toya: Yeah.

John: I mean, you wouldn't deny Him that. Would you?

Toya: No.

John: You're not gonna tell Him what He can answer and what he can't. You can pray that, and you can pray that the Lord would stop its growth right where it is and give you a full life of health.

Toya: I'm sorry.

John: Go ahead.

Toya: Is it wrong to not...I mean, I just thought whatever He wants.

John: That's it.

Toya: I mean...

John: That's it, but you can pray with all your heart and with all your might, "Lord, if it is Your will and if it will bring You glory and if it's Your purpose for my life, take it away. Render it ineffective, benign,

whatever." Or you can say, "Lord, that would be my first choice, but my second choice is that you would give me the grace and the strength to see Your face in this, to see Your hand in this, to see Your glory in this." Frankly, the worst thing that could happen to you is the best thing that could happen to you. Isn't it?

Toya: Mm-hmm.

John: I mean, the worst thing that could happen is you die, and that is the best thing that could happen to all of us. Now whether or not that's God's will, I don't know. But I can see He's already worked His grace in your heart. And I know you love Him and trust Him, don't you?

Toya: Yes.

John: And you trust Him for this, don't you?

Toya: Oh, yes.

John: And you just want to be used to His glory, and that's really the essence of your prayer. But you can ask Him to remove it, and I think you can ask Him that truly and honestly and passionately. Then you can ask Him, "And Lord, if that's not what You want, than give me the grace and somehow glorify me through...glorify Yourself through me in this situation." And you want to know something? He's already doing that tonight. Doesn't He?

See, we see in your smile...I see in your smile the work of God. You know most people who've got that kind of news, they're not gonna stand up there with a smile on their face and with hope and faith and confidence that God is in charge. He is, isn't he?

Toya: Uh-huh.

John: And you know that, and He's your Lord and your Redeemer. And He cares more about you than any of us, than anybody who knows you. And He knows more of what you need and what will glorify Him and what will bring honor to Him than you can ever imagine. And so He's gonna glorify Himself through you. He'll always do that for His children. So look for the ways in which God can be honored, and He's honored in the joy that I see on your face, in the confidence, in the faith, in the trust.

But Toya, we're all gonna join you in prayer. Can we do that? Can we just have a word of prayer for her right now?

Toya: Thank you.

John: Father, You know Your child Toya, and You know her heart, and You know her life. And You also know her body, her brain. You know everything about her. Nothing escapes You. She's Yours forever, and Lord, You know that this is a trial of great proportions for her. And Lord, we come humbly, and we would ask You unhesitatingly to give her physical healing and wholeness, to stop the growth of that tumor, to even diminish it, and to give her a full life to honor and glorify You. That would be our desire, because we love her, and because we care about her. And we sympathize with her pain, the pain of those who love her, her family and friends. And we are weary with what sin does in this world. We, like Jesus, stand beside the tomb of Lazarus and weep...not for Lazarus, but for the constant, incessant impact of sin. And would long that You would break the power of sin that destroys the body and well as the soul of so many. And we would fight; we would resist what sin does. We would also love to see You glorified through healing her in a way that has no human explanation, so that You alone receive the glory.

But You know Lord, perhaps for You there is great glory than we would ever imagine in our request. And so we ask that through her life, You would exalt Jesus Christ, through her faith, her joy, her peace and her hope in the midst of this that Christ be glorified. That is our prayer, and we thank You, Father, that we'll all be together in Your presence someday forever where there's no sorrow, no sadness, no crying now sickness and no death. And in that glorious hope we live and face life and even death. We thank You for that hope and even that joy. We can rejoice in all things, even those things which could take our lives, because that is not the end. That's the beginning.

In the meantime, we commit Toya to You, and we ask that she might experience Your grace and Your love and Your strength, and if it's Your will, Your healing, in the name of Christ...and everyone said, Amen. Amen.

Time has gone, and I don't know how anybody could take us to a higher place, do you, than the throne of God. And I think maybe we just ought to leave with that in our hearts. And you know what? There are a lot of people in our church who are struggling through things like that, not to minimize Toya's, but she was thankful for our church family, and that's understandable. Isn't it? I mean, you need to be remembering to pray.

And I was thinking this afternoon, just that I needed, and I didn't earlier in the service, but I was thinking this afternoon, I need to remind you to pray for our church. You need to pray for our church. You need to pray for me. You know that, don't you? I mean, I'm serious. You need to pray for me for strength and wisdom and protection and faithfulness and holiness and all of these things. I need your prayers, and you need to pray that the Word of God would go forth with power. Right? You need to pray for the elders and the leaders and the deacons and the teachers, and you need to pray for the people around you.

You know, we all dress well and look well and smell good, and we're wretched on the inside. And we have all the problems that the world brings to bear, don't we? Some of you have a broken heart over your children. Some of you have a broken heart over your grandchildren. Some of you have a terrible marriage, and you're wounded and hurt by your spouse. And some of you are mistreated. Some of you are struggling in a job. Some of you are out of a job. Some of you are having financial problems. Some of you are in the tank with your foolish credit card. Some of you are looking at disease, illness. It's just life, isn't it?

It's pretty silly to think that the Church's responsibility is to cure all that. All we want to do is to teach you to trust God. If you want to come in for counseling, that's fine. We'll try to help you with your problem you've got, so you can go back and get another one. And because that's life...so if you'd like to trade in the one you've got for another one, we'll be happy to help. We're not here to eliminate your problems. We're here to tell you there's a God who will lift you above them all, and we saw a little of that tonight. Let's covenant to pray for each other. Can we do that? We need to do that.

Father, we thank You again for this time of fellowship, thank You that we could be reminded of Your marvelous, rich, thrilling foods of Your word. We thank You that in the midst of strife and trouble and trials, there can be a profound peace in our hearts. It's in that peace that we rejoice, the peace that passes all understanding. And we long for the day when all our trials are over, and we enter into eternal joy. Thank You for that promise, in Christ's name, Amen.

Announcer: You've been listening to Pastor, Bible teacher and author, John MacArthur, and we trust that you've been encouraged. John is featured speaker on Grace to You, a daily half-hour teaching program available on Christian radio, streamed audio and podcast. For more information about the minister of Grace to You or a catalog of all of John's print and audio resources, visit /

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).